

Capitol Region Council of Governments

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MINUTES OF REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

April 15, 2010

ATTENDANCE

Members and Alternates

Sandra Bobowski
Sue Errickson
Patrick Kennedy
Thomas Manning
Karl Robert Profe
Earle Monroe
Lamont Aheart
Janet Ramsay
Horace Brown
Alfred Bertoline
Eric W. Schaefer
Linda Keith
Abraham Ford
Bradley Pellissier
Al LeFebvre
Tom Derlinga

Town

Hartford
Tolland
South Windsor
Bolton
Windsor
Wethersfield
Vernon
Windsor Locks
Manchester
Windsor
Glastonbury
Avon
Bloomfield
Somers
Bloomfield
East Granby

Others Present

Mary Ellen Kowalewski	CRCOG
Emily Moos	CRCOG
Jocelyn Mathiasen	CRCOG
Sandy Fry	CRCOG
Kathleen Kores	Suffield
Nasser Hajo	ViewPoint

Having reached a quorum, the meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.

Introductions and Welcome to New Members

Mary Ellen Kowalewski led introductions and welcomed new members to the commission.

Adoption of Minutes: February 18, 2010

The minutes of from February 18th stated that a typographical corrected was requested, but did not give the specifics of the correction. It was requested that more specificity be given in the future. A motion was made by Sue Errickson and seconded by Patrick Kennedy to adopt the minutes from the February 18, 2010 meeting. The motion carried with abstentions from Mr. LeFebvre, Mr. Pellesier, Mr. Ford, Ms. Kieth, Mr. Schaefer and Mr. Bertoline.

Presentation on CROG's New Connecticut On-Line Building Permit System

Jocelyn Mathiasen, Special Projects Coordinator at CROG gave a presentation on CROG's new on-line building permit system highlighting the background of the program. This program is internet-based as it allows permit applicants in towns to apply for and receive permits, track status and conduct research online. This software will help towns manage the permit review, approval and inspections process. The project initially involves 9 CT communities, but can be expanded to any community in the state. Ms. Mathiasen's presentation highlighted benefits to towns and next steps toward encouraging more towns to join the nine pilot towns inside and outside the Capitol Region. She stated that through Mary Ellen Kowalewski, the members of the Regional Planning Commission could receive a cost list for this system.

Ms. Mathiasen was joined by the lead consultant on the project from a Belmont, MA company called ViewPoint. Mr. Nasser Hajo gave a demonstration of the functionality of the online permitting software. He demonstrated how both an applicant and the staff of a municipality might utilize the software throughout the permitting process; he emphasized that on both ends, the key advantages of this system will be the ability to increase efficiency and save money.

A commission member asked whether through the software a regulation could be attached to a specific permit. Mr. Hajo stated that this is possible.

A commission member asked who will have access to the software and about the cost to towns after the system has been set up. Ms. Mathiasen explained that the software will be hosted on a cloud network and can be accessed from any computer. She also explained that there will be yearly maintenance fees to be paid by the towns.

A Commission member asked about using this software in town even if another system is already in place. Mr. Hajo stated that it is possible to convert to this new system and that the conversion is something that his firm can handle.

A Commission member identified himself as a contractor and asked how contractors will be notified if there is a discrepancy between the amount that they record as their project cost and the amount that the project will actually cost. Mr. Hajo explained that there is a way for the town to keep check on cost entries by contractors and that if a balance is still owed, an automatic emailing system will notify the contractor of that balance. The commissioner asked about payment method stating that this system will require a change in when payments must be made. Ms. Mathiasen stated that with this new system all payments must be made prior to an application's approval and that this is the case in most Capitol Region towns as it is in all Massachusetts towns.

Presentation on Creating Bicycle Friendly Communities

Ms. Sandy Fry gave a presentation on Creating Bicycle Friendly Communities. She stated that the standards for Bike Friendly Communities designation have been formalized over the years of the program's existence. She stated that there are now levels of achievement built into the program and that only two communities in the country, Davis, California and Portland, Oregon that have achieved the highest level of Platinum. Ms. Fry explained that becoming a bike friendly community elevates three things, health, wealth and freedom and these are the concepts upon which the bike friendly communities program now campaigns. Ms. Fry stated that the CROG and the Central Connecticut Bicycle Alliance have received a NHTSA grant to formalize a bicycle education program in the Capitol Region and that any questions about this new program should be directed to Beth Emery, the new Bicycle Education Coordinator. She stated that this program should have a positive impact on the amount of riders that we see commuting to work and daily activities in the region. Ms. Fry stated that she had placed a sample community assessment survey at everyone's place to assess whether a community is a bike friendly community. She stated that she would be happy to come to any community that would like to have her present on this topic.

Update On CROG's Sustainable Communities Initiative:

Mary Ellen Kowalewski gave an update on the CRCOG Sustainable Communities Initiative stating that internal meetings had taken place to further define the mission and potential future activities related to this endeavor. Ms. Kowalewski turned the presentation over to Emily Moos who demonstrated some of the features of the growing website and Facebook page for the Initiative. Ms. Kowalewski requested as a part of forwarding this initiative, that the commission consider the possibility of amending the regional plan to include the Smart Growth Guidelines for Sustainable Design and Development in their entirety. Sue Errickson stated that this is an excellent idea and that she would be supportive of that action. Ms. Kowalewski stated that this will be the subject of further discussion internally at CRCOG and with the Commission at coming meetings.

Report on Zoning and Subdivision Referrals:

Emily Moos gave a report on the zoning and subdivision referrals. She noted that the City of Hartford had submitted their Plan of Conservation and Development update, One City, One Plan and that this was an excellent example of a comprehensive plan update process. Sandra Bobowski commented on the extensive public outreach process surrounding this plan and commended the city planning staff for a job well done. Emily Moos stated that the plan emphasized several implementation actions that listed CRCOG as a partner and that CRCOG will look forward to working with the city on these issues. She stated that the plan noted two inconsistencies with the 2009 Regional Plan of Conservation and Development, one which has already been addressed and a second which CRCOG will work with the city to address as is necessary. A motion was made by Sue Errickson and seconded by Lamont Aheart to endorse the referrals as they were reported. The motion was carried with a unanimous vote.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.